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Istook Denounces Federal Power Grab Over Organ Distribution

Washington, D.C. -- Doctors, not federal bureaucrats, should determine who receives organ transplants. That was the message from Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) today in helping pass (by 275 to 147) HR 2418, the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Amendments of 1999.

The bill reverses a Clinton-Gore Administration regulation that would put the federal Department of Health and Human Services in charge.

“It’s tough enough for doctors and hospitals to make these very difficult decisions based on medical judgment,” said Istook. **“We don’t need the federal government making them instead.”**

Istook cited the success of states like Oklahoma in encouraging people to become organ donors to help the people in their community or state. **“Some states go to great lengths to encourage people to donate. Others are not as successful. Instead of encouraging more people to become donors, the federal government is taking from the states which are successful and giving to the others.”**

Istook, along with many other co-sponsors of the bill, contend the number of organ donors would drop if states no longer had incentives to recruit donors, knowing that people in the state and region would be the first patients to be considered for transplants.

Calling the measure a “power grab” by the Clinton administration, Istook claimed the Shalala regulation would remove the incentive for states to encourage donation.

“This most personal of all issues, what happens to your body when you die, should not become a federal issue.”